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**More details/abstract:** Tanzania, along with several other African countries, is experiencing a national mining boom, which has prompted hundreds of thousands of men and women to migrate to mineral-rich locations. At these sites, relationships between the sexes defy the sexual norms of the surrounding countryside to embrace new relational amalgams of polygamy, monogamy and promiscuity. This article challenges the assumption that female prostitution is widespread. Using interview data with women migrants, we delineate six 'wifetypes', namely sexual-cum-conjugal relationships between men and women that vary in their degree of sexual and material commitment. In contrast to bridewealth payments, which involved elders formalising marriages through negotiations over reproductive access to women, sexual negotiations and relations in mining settlements involve men and women making liaisons and co-habitation arrangements directly between each other without third-party intervention. Economic interdependence may evolve thereafter with the possibility of women, as well as men, offering material support to their sex partners.

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# **PROSTITUTION OR PARTNERSHIP?**

## **WIFESTYLES IN TANZANIAN ARTISANAL GOLD-MINING SETTLEMENTS**

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## PROSTITUTION OR PARTNERSHIP?

### WIFESTYLES IN TANZANIAN ARTISANAL GOLD-MINING SETTLEMENTS

#### ABSTRACT

*Tanzania, along with several other African countries, is experiencing a national mining boom, which has prompted hundreds of thousands of men and women to migrate to mineral-rich sites. At these sites, relationships between the sexes defy the sexual norms of the surrounding countryside to embrace new relational amalgams of polygamy, monogamy and promiscuity. This article challenges the assumption that female prostitution is widespread. Using interview data with women migrants, we delineate six 'wifestyles', namely sexual-cum-conjugal relationships between men and women that vary in their degree of sexual and material commitment. In contrast to bridewealth payments, which involved elders formalizing marriages through negotiations over reproductive access to women, sexual negotiations and relations in mining settlements involves men and women making liaisons and co-habitation arrangements directly between each other without third party intervention. Economic interdependence may evolve thereafter, with the possibility of women as well as men, offering material support to their sex partners.*

#### INTRODUCTION

Tanzanian artisanal mining settlements have gained a reputation for being places of sexual amorality and are the bane of nearby villages endorsing tradition-bound moral standards. In several respects, this is not surprising, mining literature related to gold rush strikes worldwide, focusing on the gold digging activities of men, have often had the sub-theme of women's metaphorical gold digging activities as prostitutes. Money-making is seen as the primary focus of men's and women's aims to the exclusion of marriage and family life. This article, based on qualitative interviews in 2009 with women living in artisanal gold mining settlements in southern Tanzania, interrogates the validity of this stereotype. Focusing on the relations between men and women, we trace how sexual ties form and evolve, alert to whether prostitution exists and deflects from bonds of caring, sharing and loving between the sexes.

While focusing on lifestyles and, in particular, wifestyles in artisanal mining, this is not an article on artisanal mining *per se*. During the last two decades, a growing body of literature has increasingly unpacked the concept of artisanal mining<sup>1</sup> and its role in sub-Saharan Africa (Banchirigah 2006, Hilson

<sup>1</sup> Artisanal mining involves labour-intensive mineral extraction by individuals and groups with limited capital investments making use of rudimentary technologies. The sector is responsible for the extraction of a wide range of minerals and metals, precious as well as industrial. The continuous increase over the last nine years in the world market price for gold has meant that artisanal gold mining attracts a significant number of people throughout Africa (Hilson 2009, Jönsson and Fold 2011). Artisanal miners have a range of motivations for engaging in mining with some seeking poverty alleviation and others wealth accumulation. At the turn of the millennium, there were around nine million artisanal miners operating in Sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated 50 million people

2009, 2011, Jönsson and Fold 2011). These studies challenge many of the misconceptions associated with artisanal mining; namely that the sector is chaotic and criminalized. Commonly studies criticize the environmental degradation and occupational hazards of artisanal mining, nonetheless, many if not most demonstrate that artisanal mining is organised and labour-absorbing, playing a significant role in the livelihoods of millions of people throughout Africa (Grätz 2003, Banchirigah 2008, Jönsson and Bryceson 2009, Fisher et al. 2009, Tschakert 2009, Geenen 2011). Just as with artisanal miners, several misconceptions about women and their lifestyles in artisanal mining camps prevail, in particular related to women's relationships to men (Werthmann 2009). This article attempts to nuance the discussion on male-female relationships in mining camps by delineating and scrutinizing what we term 'wifeways', in contradistinction to prostitution (Laite 2009).

Our focus is primarily on women's rather than men's perspectives on sexuality in relation to the dynamics of monogamy, polygamy and promiscuity in an arena of rapid material change that is inevitably leading towards the reconfiguration of marriage, family and work. Giddens (1992), writing on sexual intimacy, love and commitment in the context of capitalist modernity observes that the marriage for life ideal has increasingly been replaced by a trend towards independently negotiated, open-ended conjugal bonds that are no longer subject to the objective of producing children for perpetuation of family descent. The latter is termed 'plastic sexuality' defined as 'decentred sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction' (p.2).<sup>2</sup> With greater individual autonomy, sex becomes primarily pleasure-seeking for women as well as men and a somewhat contradictory quest for romantic love and autonomy on the part of women ensues. Giddens' identification of a 'pure relationship' ideal in place of marriage for life, does not imply sexual purity but rather: 'a relationship of sexual and emotional equality, which is explosive in its connotations for pre-existing forms of gender power (p.2) ... a social relation [that] is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it' (p.58). This instrumental restructuring of sexual intimacy on the part of two willing individuals to bond as a couple is conditional on their achievement of emotional and material security, a state that is far from easily attainable in the unpredictable context of Tanzanian artisanal mining. Nonetheless, it is likely to be more conducive to mining site realities than a marriage arranged by tribal elders in rural villages remote from the material pressures of gold production within a global value chain.

Our qualitative interview data provides the opportunity to document how capitalist modernity associated with market-centred artisanal mining has moved male-female relations from the realm of agrarian community norms to a field of negotiable sexual relationships. In apprehending the reality of Tanzanian gold-mining settlements, we begin with consideration of forms of marriage and sexual

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depending on the sector as an indirect livelihood source. In Africa, Tanzania is considered to have the second largest population of artisanal miners (Hayes 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Giddens (1992) remarks that plastic sexuality is facilitated by the development of modern contraception, but the concept extends beyond technological innovation to a commentary on the social and economic uncertainties of life trajectories within capitalist modernity.

liaisons that were sanctioned in Tanzania's non-capitalist agrarian village communities. From there the focus is on how men and women meet each other in mining settlements, where their respective hopes and expectations for engaging in mining and business activities conjoin, crystallizing a new reflexive cultural frontier. Exploring the transition from sexual and conjugal relations based on traditional family or lineage intervention to independent, often *ad hoc* coupling, leads to a consideration of 'wifetypes', the evolving spectrum of *de facto* conjugal relations that male miners and women have negotiated to meet their needs for material support, emotional security and sex from one another as capitalist relations of production and human reproduction solidify. In the conclusion, we review how occupational and cultural changes in artisanal mining sites across the country relate to marital ties in Tanzania generally and return to the issue of prostitution.

## TRANSFORMING SEXUALITY

In Tanzania, sex is considered a fundamental, natural and pleasurable part of life that has the vital function of biological reproduction, producing children for the perpetuation of families, lineages and the nation-state. Over 25 years ago, Bryceson and Vuorela (1984) characterized Tanzania as a high fertility culture moulded by its agrarian foundations where sex was highly valued for its child-begetting function ensuring the survival of lineages. Women's fertility was a central cultural concern. A woman's social identity as an adult was contingent on her achievement of motherhood.

Sex is almost invariably essentialized in the psyche of cultures worldwide, in denial of the culturally constructed form and content of sexual practices, values and human relationships (Caplan 1987, Lyons and Lyons 2004). Sexual double standards are prevalent in many, if not most, cultures in one form or another. Victorian culture that imputed a strong sex drive to men as opposed to women represents one extreme. In East African cultures the gender binary is more subdued but nonetheless remains. Nelson (1987), writing about Kenyan Kikuyu culture, observed the centrality of sex to men and women in daily life underlined by the cultural belief that men's sex drive superceded that of women. Men viewed sex as a pleasurable, natural and healthy pursuit. It was acknowledged and condoned that women enjoyed sex but more stress was placed on the importance of female sex for procreation.<sup>3</sup> It was generally expected that women would exercise more restraint in sex.

Diamond's (1998: 92) comparative review of human sexuality counters biological essentialism, demonstrating how differences in the material environment through time prompt different cultural constructions of sex. These constructions are based around a repertoire of human sexual behavior which he refers to as a 'combination of marriage, co-parenting, and adulterous temptation', highly adaptable and unique to the human species. This adaptability is evidenced in the transition from farming to mining communities in Tanzania. As production relations alter in a society, reproductive and

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<sup>3</sup> In Nelson's (1987:222) interviews of 63 Kikuyu urban women who gave reasons for sexual relations the replies were: procreation (52 per cent), pleasure or love (36 per cent), health (20 per cent) and material payment (10 per cent).

sexual relations are reconfigured (Bryceson and Vuorela 1984), a point reinforced by Giddens (1992). For example, at low levels of population density, the hierarchical control of polygamous men may have provided corporate safety, but as human communities grew in size, this reproductive strategy was socially disruptive preventing virile young men from the opportunity to procreate. Monogamy released the sexual constraints faced by young men (Diamond 1998).

The incidence of promiscuity is a possibility whether polygamy or monogamy prevails and indeed all three forms of sexuality can be coterminous to greater or lesser extents in any given community as our case study evidence indicates. Certainly, the transition from stable, low population density, decentralized non-capitalist agrarian societies to a concentrated artisanal mining population characterized by rapid turnover of highly mobile people in peak sexually active ages offers many temptations. Combined with the atmosphere of uncertainty amongst miners working for potentially high stakes, gold mining sites are arenas of overt sexual enticement for men and women alike, relative to the surrounding rural communities.

Sexual experimentation in Tanzanian mining areas has emerged against a historical backdrop of ritualized and symbolically controlled patrilineal, matrilineal and cognatic kinship systems (Mbilinyi 1988). More recently world religious influences, notably the polygamous practices of Islam and the monogamous strictures of Christianity, have played a role in unfolding sexual relations. Now, as the impact of the global economy deepens and new forms of trade, investment and work relations spread, capitalist inter-personal relations are permeating sexual and family relations. The large-scale movement of men and women associated with mining is motivated primarily by a materialist quest for an improved standard of living and modernity rather than ensuring the continuation of lineages and agrarian ways of life or following religiously defined codes of behaviour. Sex's association with human reproduction weakens as the pursuit of capitalist modernity spreads (Giddens 1992).<sup>4</sup> Removed from a rural sense of propriety and communal concerns, women gain autonomy in decision-making over their body and feel less circumscribed about sex (Talle 1998).

Most artisanal mining communities, with their makeshift settlements devoid of male elders' control, are very different from agrarian villages. In our two study settlements, the majority of residents are migrants hailing from a wide spectrum of home areas, making it unlikely that ritual life, if there was time for it, would or could be agreed upon in relation to marriage (Jönsson and Bryceson 2009). Social controls on sexual fidelity are fluid calling into question the nature of polygamous and monogamous practices. Promiscuity can thrive in these circumstances. This article sifts through field evidence from mining sites in southern Tanzania to ascertain women's attitudes towards changing sexual relations. We utilize verbatim quotes from our women informants where possible to situate the reader in the narrative of the women themselves.

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<sup>4</sup> Giddens' term 'sexual plasticity' refers to sex freed from reproductive goals under capitalism.

### *Historical patterns*

With over 100 tribal groups, Tanzania is ethnically endowed with a wide spectrum of marriage practices associated with different descent group structures. Unilineal descent dominates mainland Tanzania. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as population densities and the cash economy intensified, patrilineal practices have gradually and unobtrusively encroached on matrilineality (Moser 1987). Meanwhile, more overtly, conversion to Christian and Islamic beliefs that enshrine patriarchal principles took hold. Certainly, the tribes most represented in our surveys, the Sukuma, Nyaramba, Nyaturu, Nyakyusa, Safwa and Nyamwezi are patrilineal.

Cattle-keeping patrilineal groups, notably the Nyamwezi, Sukuma and Kuria, are well-known for their demanding bridewealth systems (Abrahams 1967, Fleisher 1999, Mhando 2011). Expensive bridewealth thresholds enforced by male elders have traditionally kept young men's marriage prospects at bay for a considerable time after their entry into adulthood. Elaborate rites of passage and some form of bridewealth structure the majority of lineage-based tribal groups. Bridewealth has functioned as a motive force and pivot of local economies through time.

Bridewealth had a two-fold regulatory role: functioning as a community maxim that: 1) inculcated female subservience and respect towards men and 2) provided a socially agreed contract of exchange that bound women in marriage (Lovett 1996). Bridewealth payments hinted at the status hierarchy of power within the community. The prospective bride's worth was calculated on the basis of behavioural demeanor as a dutiful wife, hard worker and above all fertile childbearer. Such qualities in a woman were believed to contribute to the wealth and status of her husband.

It was possible for men to arrange engagement to an unborn child, with payment of a bridewealth deposit at birth, if it was a girl. Girls were expected to be married soon after puberty. This was related to the heavy premium placed on the girl's virginity, which could be checked by female elders on her wedding day (Wilson 1952). Unmarried women were frowned upon and deemed too disruptive to the moral order of the tribal community. Girls and women had no autonomy in determining when and whom they married. This was a decision of the male elders of the prospective bride and groom's families. Once married, women were expected to be dutiful to their husbands and sanctioned by their husband's family and their own natal family to remain married. Divorce necessitated the return of bridewealth property by the woman's natal homestead to the husband's family. The amount returned could be reduced upon consideration of how many children had been borne, the duration of the marriage and the reasons for divorce. Such dealings brought shame and regret, leading to pressure on the woman to stay married. The Native Courts presided over by male elders endeavoured to uphold the stability and irreversibility of marriage.

In patrilineal groups, the paternity of children has generally been an issue vis-à-vis bridewealth payments. Nyakyusa brides were subjected to virginity tests on their wedding day with compensation paid to the groom's family if the bride failed the test. Similarly, in cases of discovery of a wife's infidelity, her husband would seek compensation from the male transgressor. Nonetheless, in most tribal

societies, secret sex between lovers, married or unmarried, was not only known to happen but tacitly condoned, as long as the affair was pursued discretely. This gave young men a welcome chance for sexual encounters, usually with a *rendezvous* outside the village in secluded agricultural fields, woods or elsewhere (Caplan 1992, 2001). Illicit local liaisons tended to be kept undercover and were not a source of moral condemnation if they were kept inconspicuous.

Meanwhile women who dared to leave their home areas and the protection of their lineage faced moral censure, labeled 'prostitutes' (*malaya*) by virtue of their independence from male lineage control (Mbilinyi 1988; McCurdy 2001). Such unattached women posed a threat to the social order constructed by rural male patriarchs, whose power rested on control of women and younger men. The spread of Christianity compounded the social disdain that the prostitutes experienced. Christianity's insistence on monogamous unions caste independent women as potential home wreckers.

#### *Miners' time off pastimes: drinking and flirting*

Moving to the present, our artisanal mining survey sites are culturally set apart from surrounding rural villages, even though the two exist in close spatial proximity to one another.<sup>5</sup> Given the mobile and youthful demographic composition of the mining population, there is an absence of male elders for exerting moral pressure over sexual behaviour in the manner described above. The high turnover of migrants makes it impossible for everyone to be familiar with one another, let alone know each others' family backgrounds, which precludes community gossip from having the same moderating influence on individuals' sexual behaviour. Some older members of the settlement cannot resist trying to compensate for the lack of counseling by speaking their mind about younger people's courtship activities, but there is a distinct impression that the two generations, who in the case of the women break down into 'older married women' and 'younger unmarried women' are speaking past each other.

Meeting and mating with the opposite sex is pragmatically facilitated in miners' daily lives by the existence of bars that serve as fueling stations for fulfillment of the basic needs of eating and drinking. Barmaids, mostly young women, nicknamed *dogo dogo*<sup>6</sup> (spring chicks) to signify how they represent successive waves of newly arrived young women, are employed or, more commonly, work for tips in these establishments. The most popular is humorously called the Vatican.

<sup>5</sup> The mining settlements are both located in Chunya, southwestern Tanzania. Itumbi and Matundasi are adjoining settlements 15 km apart with a combined population of 7640 in 2007 (local government officials' most recent estimate). Thirty-two women in Itumbi (26) and Matundasi (6) were selected and interviewed by Hannelore Verbrugge with the assistance of John Wihallah, a native Kiswahili speaker, former miner and current head of a local NGO in August-September 2009. A snowballing technique was used to identify interviewees within an occupationally stratified sampling grid of the area's six major economic activities: 1) alcohol sales (barmaids, restaurant bar managers, brewers), 2) trade (cloth, food), 3) mining, 4) services (pharmacists, hair stylists) and 5) farming and unemployed, across a full range of economically active ages (16 to 57 years). The grid ensured representation of a broad spectrum of experiences and opinions. The oral history interviews centred on the women's family background, migration, occupational change, conjugal relationships and children.

<sup>6</sup> *Dogo dogo* literally means 'little ones' but in the context of successive waves of new incoming girls, it has taken on the connotation of 'spring chicks'. Elsewhere in Tanzania, women are sometimes referred to as *kuku* (translated 'chicken').



Barmaids generally work as casualized labour. Very few receive a fixed salary or adhere to a work schedule. Instead upon their arrival in the settlement most approach the bar owners asking for the chance to work:

There's a lot of staff circulation. The girls may stay a month or half a month, some of them are getting married, others are staying for a few weeks and then they retreat to another area. This happens because once a new barmaid is employed here, all customers want to go to the new one, so the old one switches to another area... We just depend on introductions from people we know who come and say: 'this is my best friend and she is used to selling beers, please employ her.'...Trust is an issue. We have to put in writing how many crates the barmaid is taking each day to ensure she pays back the right amount of money. Many of them try to be honest but when they leave, some of them, try to steal, in some cases, even my clothes. Most of the girls we hire are young. Once there was a newcomer of 40 years of age who used to be a barmaid in Mbeya. She wanted the job, but she looked the age of my mother so I refused. (bar manager, 28 years old, **married**, Itumbi, 8 September, 2009)

The barmaids have various ploys for making money:

The man orders and pays for 10 beers, but the barmaid will secretly return two to three beers to the beer seller so the seller will resell the beer and pay the proceeds to the girl. This is the way that the *dogo dogo* earn and sometimes if the men become totally drunk, the girls take more of the beers and run away and sell the beers themselves. Sometimes they deliberately confuse the bill. 'You ordered 15, you have to pay!', communicating what they have done to the sellers to claim the over-charged amount. And sometimes they steal the money in the miners' pockets since they are accustomed to putting all their earnings in their pocket, so that people can see that they are wealthy. It is the way of showing that they have something, they are important, they are rich! (restaurant hotel operator, aged 33, **single**, Itumbi, 20 August, 2009)

The boundaries between romantic dating, propositioning and sexual intimidation are continually blurred. Primarily in search for boyfriends, the girls expect to be treated with food, drinks and gifts from the men. Barmaids may ask for money for having sexual intercourse, but there is nothing fixed about such payments when they happen. The same amount of money may apply or extend to a whole night together. Negotiating signals on both sides tend to be ambiguous and contestable, but in areas where competition over the 'best' girls is high and cash is flowing, payments may occasionally be as high as several hundred dollars.

When a man with money enters a bar and buys a beer and offers it to a woman without saying anything, if the woman agrees to take the beer, he sees that as a sign of agreement that he can have sex with her. Sometimes it happens that one woman gets three beers from different men so this means that she has agreed to three liaisons. Now how is that going to be handled? That is why the women end up being beaten. I have seen many conflicts arising from women accepting offers of beer from different men. (woman *local brewer*, aged 32, **single**, Itumbi, 24 August, 2009)

Arrangements to meet after the girl's shift require logistical maneuvering since the bars are not brothels. In fact some bar owners have explicit rules banning men from the girls' rooms. Usually the men have places in mind where they can take or later meet with their selected sex partner.

Usually men at first stay in rooms with more than one boy but because of wanting to have sex, they have tried to build their own huts and some of them are lending houses to each other. They are looking for young girls, because those are the ones without focused vision... It is very rare for boys to allow their girls to be used by other men. (bar manager, aged 41, **married**, Itumbi, 21 August, 2009)

Most young newcomers start their working lives as barmaids but those intent on getting beyond their good time girl status consciously set boundaries on how they earn their money and steer their lives.

The men flirt and some want sex or to attract one of us as a girlfriend. If you refuse, they have reason to be abusive. It is a very competitive environment and in terms of behavior, there are no old men in Itumbi because all of them are very active, so even the old men are competing to get girlfriends. They compete with money. In Itumbi, if you have no money, you can't succeed so money speaks. There is a saying: 'no money, no honey'. Nonetheless in my case, fortunately, I can say no when one of them offers me money. It is easy to say 'no' because my business provides me with something to eat every day. The key thing that makes many girls say 'yes' is the need for food. They say yes because they are afraid of dying of hunger. (bar manager, aged 26, with boyfriend, 20 August, 2009)

The girls' 'gold rush' tends to be short-lived and yields disappointing results. Many come from troubled backgrounds of marital instability, family domestic abuse, dissension, violence or death, seeking personal autonomy and better life chances.<sup>7</sup> They are responding to perceived opportunities while tending to ignore the obvious threat of HIV/AIDS. The reported HIV+ prevalence rate was 22 per cent in 2007.<sup>8</sup> Condom usage is not widespread. Men feel that it impinges on their sexual pleasure. Know they are running big risks and may be HIV positive, most people do not like to think about, let alone talk about, the possibility of HIV infection.

Letting people know your HIV status is taboo because it means that someone has been cheating. That is why people don't want to speak about it. Especially in these mining villages, appearance is everything, to not have a bad name. I don't know how to break this taboo. (brewing & bar manager, aged 30, single, Itumbi, 23 August, 2009)

Residents in the mining settlements identify, resent and rely on the presence of these continuing influxes of young girls. Many of the women came to the settlement through this channel. Now they are married and feel insecure about the presence of the newcomers vis-à-vis their menfolk. On the other hand, the girls are the axis of the catering and service trade. Their labour is needed and is profitable. This nonetheless does not stop many older members of the population complaining about the girls' lack of morality.

## WIFESTYLES: SEXUAL PARTNERING

Existing literature on sexual relationships in mining settlements and mineral rush periods gives prominence to the role of prostitutes in servicing men's sexual needs (Goldman 1981, Gray 2010). Whereas one might readily interpret the generous drinks tipping of barmaids by miners, men's gift-giving and erratic receipt of small payments for sexual services as prostitution, this would overlook the fact that the normal organizational features of professional prostitution are largely absent notably: girls' occupational identity as prostitutes, brothel premises affording girls a room for sexual business, market

<sup>7</sup> This bears resemblance to reasons for migration reported by women working in a gold mining settlement in Burkina Faso interviewed by Werthmann (2011).

<sup>8</sup> This was recorded in nearby Matundasi mining settlement during a national testing campaign in which 760 residents were tested. Of these, 168 were positive (52 males and 116 females).

pricing of the sexual act and organizational management by male pimps or female madams and women's insistence that having sex and the sex partner were both her choice rather than a forced or practical necessity (Nelson 1987, White 1990, Tolle 1998, De Boeck 1999, Wojcicki 2002, Desmond *et al.* 2005).<sup>9</sup> Instead, sexual attraction and coy behavior of 'boy meets girl' was the norm, with the man in particular concerned with the exclusivity, at least momentarily, of his claim for attention from the specific woman he had gifted.

Women and girls, focused on attracting men, depended on their gifts of food and money for daily survival. This was the basis of daily social interaction rather than specialized prostitutes offering sex to men on an established fee basis. The bar owners, where the men and women met, were not in the habit of recruiting barmaids, nor was there evidence of any of them or others acting as madams or pimps, arranging and charging for the premises or situational context in which a prostitute would sell her services. Rather the sexual intercourse that ensued between barmaids and male customers took place in a wide range of *ad hoc* settings from miners' rented rooms, to girls' accommodation, at a friend's or in the bush. Most importantly, all of the girls interviewed either lived in hopes of finding a reliable man, or, in a minority of cases, eschewed sexual relations with men altogether.

This section is based on interviews with women in Itumbi and Matundasi about their relational ties with their families and people in the mining settlement (Verbrugge 2010). Their observations about sexual relations reveal motivations as well as patterned strategies. We use the term 'wifetypes' to denote distinct sexual relational niches that women occupy vis-à-vis men that differ on the basis of emotional and economic ties to their sex partner as well as degree of sexual exclusivity between the two individuals. Wifetypes reflect the collision of historically ingrained and innovative forms of sexual ties. Tribal life cycle courting and marriage patterns of an ascriptive nature, under the direction of rural patriarchs, are progressively being dislodged by the cumulative effect of individuals' livelihood, lifestyle and sexual partnering decisions in response to new opportunities, risks and vulnerabilities (Hodgson 2001). The new sexuality does not arise solely from market commodification. The rising momentum of cultural and social experimentation embedded in the spread of capitalist values, work norms and leisure time pursuits, spurs new sexual preferences and associated emotional needs. Path-dependent sexual relationships unfold, be they promiscuous, polygamous or monogamous, which deeply impact on people's material welfare.

It should be noted that the term 'wife' is used very loosely in mining settlements. Very few people are formally married in traditional or religious terms. Relationships blur from sexual partner to boyfriend to husband, in the absence of demarcating rituals or public ceremonies. The following outlines six relational ties that allow for fluidity in one direction or another:

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<sup>9</sup> White's (1990) meticulous study of prostitution in colonial Nairobi draws attention to the blurred line between wife and *malaya* prostitutes servicing male sexual and domestic needs.

### *Good time girls (dogo dogo)*

Aged in their early teens through to mid-20s, many if not most girls entering as migrants find their way into an arena of sexual conquest that can lead to misadventure. One night stands abound. When the mines are producing gold, the men are in high spirits celebrating their success or at least optimism of success with the girls. The young women heavily rely on the free food, drinks, and gifts of fashionable clothing. There is a continually high turnover. During the rainy season when there is little gold digging many migrate elsewhere due to the seasonal lull in the livelihood prospects, then there are those who leave because of illness from the excesses of alcohol, an erratic diet and exposure to STDs, conflictual interpersonal relations or abandonment by their newfound boyfriends. While there is novelty, fun and adventure during the mining seasons, the young women nonetheless face many hazards. It is from these successive cohorts that miners find cohabiting partners. Newly formed couples may manage to stay together, get married and in rare cases establish longstanding conjugal relations. In this way, some newcomers eventually become the settlement's hard-working, respected matrons who bemoan the passions and pathos of their successors. The following records local observations and direct experiences of the 'good time girls' of the present day.

The young boys are trying to attract or even harass the young girls. They inform each other of which woman is easy-going or not ... they don't like to waste time....these young girls are having so many misadventures. Sometimes a girl is beaten after taking a man's money without doing what they agreed upon with him. (brewer, miner, & farmer, aged 28, married to 1<sup>st</sup> husband for 13 years, Itumbi, 22 August, 2009)

### *Cohabiting girlfriend-wives (hawara)*

Arising from discovered compatibilities, be they social or sexual, cohabiting relationships tend to be motivated by social and economic convenience on the part of either partner or both. Sharing accommodation can save money and affords people many of the comforts of home, day-to-day cooperative interaction and sex. Girls are especially eager to find a man to live with that can be related to their need for a sense of both material security and physical protection given the 'rough life' of the mining settlement.<sup>10</sup> Genuine affection brings many of these couples together. Others' cohabitation may be prompted by the birth of a child, which the miner acknowledges as his. Their decision to live together is sometimes marked by an impromptu gathering of friends and well-wishers. But that is rare.

Most couples begin their cohabitation through happenstance barely cognizant of a joint social existence let alone considering how long they may live together. The passage of time may strengthen compatibility and interdependence of the couple. After about three to six months of being together the couple are seen to have withstood the test of time and are generally considered 'married' in *hawara*

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<sup>10</sup> Talle (1998) notes that single women felt a stronger need for physical protection in the mining settlements than urban towns in Tanzania.

relationships that infer permanence and sexual faithfulness of the women towards her male partner (Tolle 1998). However, the actual duration of the couple living together is a matter of months not years. When one or the other partner vacates the shared premises with all of his or her material possessions, most are walking away from each other with total finality, tantamount to a clean-break divorce minus the need for any legal proceedings.

Life in Itumbi is not very good. My friend that I migrated with three months ago is now married to a certain boy here in Itumbi, but I have seen that some of the girls are getting married during the dry season, but during the rainy season, when there is very little gold being extracted, they are already getting divorced. Being married to a miner is a temporary thing. If they have no money, they are very polite. They are not after women or young girls. But when they start earning money, they start seeking to have a relationship. (unemployed, depends on boyfriends, aged 16 years old, Itumbi, 21 August, 2009)

### *Polygamous marriages*

Despite the many cultural precedents for polygamy in Tanzania, traditional polygamy and polygamous practices in mining localities evince some fundamental differences. In the latter, almost everyone is a migrant with lack of knowledge of their spouse's family background. Not infrequently, women marry and only discover later that their husbands are polygamist. Furthermore, the high mobility of miners ordains that many have wives in distant places to which they remit considerable sums of money. Various breaches of trust and family welfare can arise.

My husband's second wife was a newcomer. If they get information that miners are earning, they try to trap them. When I heard that my husband was married to another wife, I felt really bad because I didn't plan for such a life. I never expected this from him. Many people, especially the old and wise ones, they saw me in a sorrowful condition and tried to advise me: 'You got two children. Now, with this special gift from God, if you decide to leave these children here with your husband'<sup>11</sup> do you think that this second wife will care for your children? Or if he sends the children to his home area where you don't know anyone, do you think that it will be good for the children?' I realized that I had to stay. That is why I am always busy with running projects, which can provide me with something to support my children... Now, the second wife has left and I am happy. It is difficult for my husband to support a second wife because his mining is not going well. During the period of his second marriage, the pit was providing millions. He was giving millions to the second wife. For me, the maximum support I got was just TSh 50.000. Now, however, since the pit is not producing my husband is very attentive to me and many people are saying to him: 'now you see the importance of using the first wife, the second wife has run away and you are getting support from your first wife'. I think that maybe he has learnt a lesson.... However, when my husband was in Mbeya with his second wife, my health improved and I was relieved by not having to put up with his complaints and interference in my business. When he came back without money, it was again the same old problem he would demand: 'give us some money, because we are running out of capital to finance the gold pit'. That is why I am becoming financially weak. I'm supporting his gold pit. But am I going to get back my money or will all the money be taken again to the second wife? Once I think about this, I lose my desire for this marriage. (bar manager, used clothes, maize trade, tailoring, aged 40, married to 2<sup>nd</sup> husband, Itumbi, 25 August, 2011)

My boyfriend has a younger wife but he helps support me and my children. Sometimes, all the money he earns, if it is very little, goes to his wife because I feel that if he spends all the money here while his wife and

<sup>11</sup> Men are accorded custody of the children under tribal customary law but currently if legal and other authorities are involved the custody arrangements are more tailored to circumstances that are deemed beneficial to the children. In the event of separation, many women are left with the children, but male miners are known to assert their custody rights and send their children to their home areas to be reared by mothers, sisters or other female extended family members. Thus, child custody is a contestable issue between parents that requires research.

children have nothing that is not right. Sometimes my boyfriend can stay six months without earning. And I support him if he is here so that once he earns he helps me. So once I notice that the money is very little, I'm advising him to send money to his wife and if it is a big amount, he supports me. (bar manager & used clothes sales, aged 39, widowed with longstanding married boyfriend, Itumbi, 24 August, 2009)

### *Monogamous marriages-cum-business partnerships*

Despite the highly mobile and sexualized environment in which residents of the mining settlements live which militate for short-term, casualized sexual relations, out of the 30 interviewed women, there were seven who had marriages that endured for over 8 years, three for over 20 years. All except two were the interviewed women's first and only marriages. However, even in the two cases involving second husbands, the marriages were of an enduring nature. In one case it was apparent that the marriage was lodged on a firm religious belief in the sanctity of marriage. But the others were couples that operated with a joint economic trajectory of pooled income and property as a single welfare unit. The husbands' and wives' productive activities were characterized by a collaborative or complementary division of labour, a high incidence of joint investment and special arrangements for sending their children to good schools outside of the mine settlement. Economic trust underlined the monogamous marriages as illustrated in the following quotes.

Nowadays, life in mining and the miners themselves are changing. They have seen that women who are not involved in running any projects, are not helpful to them when they are lacking money. So some of the men are supporting women who are running projects in order to get support when they become broke from not finding gold. (bar manager, aged 26, alone, Itumbi, 25 August, 2009)

I met my husband when he was buying beers wholesale. He was running a small shop then. He is now running the biggest bar in Itumbi. At night people come to watch TV at his place and it is very busy. I deal with the money for the drinks, organizing the number of beers and crates. I also have a shop outside. We started living together in 2001. I had been assisting him up to that time. We are working together. My husband is dealing with mining also. Presently, I supervise all the home projects because my husband is dealing with mining, running ball mills and washing places. We have divided our workload duties. My husband owns a PML and a washing place. We earn around 1 million per month from the bar and the washing place. We are not farming. Sometimes we have an argument but very few times and it doesn't take a long time before we agree again. We are afraid of disturbing our plan but in general, it is going well. Together we have planned our future. We will eventually retreat to Mbeya town because we have already bought a house, which needs maintenance only. In Mbeya we are planning to open a big shop, as well as keeping the smaller shop here... I know that the women in Itumbi are used to following any man who has a good life so I assume that there must be some women chasing my husband. We have a plan and it is still on-going. I don't know if he is spending extra money on other women, but for the money, which we have planned, everything is fine. (bar manager, shop, PML, mine washing, aged 28, married monogamously for 8 years, Itumbi, interviewed 8 September, 2009)

The extreme in which men and women have pooled income and assets cited above tends to be most salient amongst the higher echelons. Other husbands and wives are likely to be operating with separate accounts related to different income streams, but this is largely a somewhat covert, negotiable area in Tanzania which contrasts with the literature on pooled and non-pooled income emanating from West Africa in which non-pooled income of wives is more overtly delineated and consensually legitimised (Whitehead 1990).

### *Single, independent women*

In contrast to the above monogamous marriages where the women expressed satisfaction and happiness with their marriages, there was a very strong representation of women who were single out of necessity or choice with some deliberately avoiding close interdependent relationships with men. In Tanzania, historically it was unthinkable for a woman not to marry. The belief was that women were always protected by their fathers (or maternal uncles in the case of matrilineality) as children, by their husbands once married and by their sons if widowed. Traditionally, women gained social status from marriage and having children (Bryceson 1995). However, those who now choose to live alone, either through bitter experiences endured during previous marriages or fear of HIV/AIDS are relatively numerous. Some young unmarried women retain their autonomy from men with the intention of avoiding AIDS and/or building an independent economic base for themselves. Most independent women had been married or in relationships with boyfriends but had been left with children that they were raising largely on their own as explained in the following case studies:

When I came here, I had capital so I decided to buy a small house and then I agreed with a certain man to stay with him. That man had a wife who died leaving three children. After staying with me for a few months, he decided to go and get his children so we had eight children in total - ten in the household. I noticed that my husband's mining was not paying. We stayed for a long time without money. It was a heavy load to take care of all these children. I decided to separate. That is why now, I am alone supporting my 5 children in my own house. I already tried living with two husbands, but it is risky to have a mining husband. It is very rare for men in mining to have a humanitarian character. If I continue to cope with them I will die from AIDS. I regret that the life of my children is very tough but at least I am alive. If I die from HIV/AIDS, what type of life will the children have? Most men who mine are here in order to earn money, not to take care of someone. I have decided that I can have a relationship with some other men, maybe in the future but at present, I have to concentrate on finding capital because my daughter is very bright. If she gets educated, she will be able to have a job so that she can take care of the family. (bar manager, maize/banana trader, aged 33, married twice now divorced, Itumbi, 20 August, 2009)

My first desire would be to continue schooling but I failed to get that chance. And when I consider the five deaths of my elder brothers and sisters, I am afraid of taking boyfriends. In this life here, there is a continuous circle of exchanging men and women every day. (laughing) The circle of life in mining is not good. (bar manager, aged 26, alone, Itumbi, 25 August, 2009)

### *Anchor wives in home areas*

Having studied male-female relationships within the mining settlements, we were nonetheless not in a position to interview an important wifestyle category which functionally exists in the form of men's money remittances and visits away from the mines to women, notably wives or mistresses living in places geographically distanced from the site. Most miners' anchor wives are situated in their home areas. They are usually first wives of the miners that married following traditional tribal rites of their home communities with bridewealth payments. These marriages do not always endure as miners migrate from one mine site to the next, but of those that do, the man's social identity, emotional connections and economic property tend to be closely linked to his anchor wife. The anchor wife's continuing residence in the home area often serves to safeguard his claim to ancestral homeland and other inheritance property. Sukuma men, originating from distant areas near Lake Victoria, were the

most numerous in our miners' survey, and were often polygamous with anchor wives resident in their home areas. The following commentary is from a woman observing her Sukuma husband's continuing links with his anchor wife.

I am free to do whatever business I like, selling fish or even buying gold as a broker. My husband is very flexible. I don't worry. He allows me to do business because it is the only way of earning income in the household. We share taking care of my grandchild. My husband is polygamous and has a first wife who stays in Mwanza. I am his second wife. My husband is good at taking care of my grandchild, but once I earn money, he may use some of it, I don't know anything about this money because he has to send the money to his first wife. He has 6 grown up sons and daughters so he has to provide some money for them. Sometimes he goes to Mwanza and sometimes he transfers the money. They don't come here. All his relatives are staying in Mwanza so once he earns something he goes there and then returns here. The first wife is in Mwanza where they built a house and it is his home area whereas here is just a working place. He came here with me for work. This kind of marriage is not very helpful or secure for me especially in the future since my husband is getting older and he has already stopped doing heavy-duty work. We have our own house but it is not improved or modern. I am just thinking that maybe, as the days are going on, there will be a time when my husband will stop working and maybe his children from Mwanza will come and take him back and then I will be here alone with my grandchild. (mine processing work, aged 57 years, married to polygamist, Itumbi, 28 August, 2009)

#### WIFESTYLES JUXTAPOSED

Historically, Tanzanians, particularly youth and rural women, had very little scope for choosing their economic and social destiny in life. They grew up in agrarian tribal societies in which the division of labour by age and sex was ascribed. Life cycle rituals celebrated changes in their social status. In the case of a girl, puberty rites marked the dawn of her status as a nubile woman of childbearing age. Soon after, she would be married to a man in exchange for bridewealth that her family may have negotiated years before. Her designated role as a wife and mother within the structure of a patrilineal or matrilineal agrarian community was largely pre-ordained.

Our use of the term 'wifetypes' is intended to provoke debate on how intimate relations between men and women are altering in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, specifically in Tanzania's mining settlements. We reject the assumption that prostitution is the essence of such relations in Tanzania's mining settlements. Rather we find it more useful to see a complex interplay of competing sexual desires, emotional needs, social status, daily practicalities, and economic security objectives (Laite 2009).

Various feminists through time have depicted marriage as prostitution, arguing that women's autonomy is exchanged for economic security (Goldman 1979, Friedan 1964, Greer 1971). **The terms 'wife' and 'prostitute' are polyvalent.** Certainly the range of wifetypes is, in our view, underpinned not only by the human need for sex but also efforts to establish interdependent ties between the sexes. Furthermore, in some of these wifetypes, it appears that women as well as men have had voice in defining the nature of the relationship, along the lines of Giddens's (1992) concept of a 'pure relationship'. Tanzania's rural subsistence ethic is likely to have a strong influence. Rural societies sought egalitarian exchange ties, in the face of not infrequent famine (Bryceson 1990). Similarly, the high-risk environment



of a mining settlement, posing threats of economic failure, illness and physical insecurity, is likely to propel men and women alike to seek relationships of interdependence.

The above outlined wifetypes can be read along a gradient of time, emotional and material commitment. Economic exchange-cum-partnership is at stake with changing and usually dichotomous objectives on the part of men and women. Relations between men and good-time girls obviously represent the lowest level of time and emotional investment, with pleasurable abandon being one of the strongest attractions for men. Young women, on the other hand, are usually combining a quest for pleasure and romance with the short-term goal of survival. Such encounters provide them with food, drink and sometimes clothing. Meanwhile, they are hoping to find the 'right man' who can offer them economic security, which is all the more imperative if they have yet to construct a viable economic livelihood in the settlement.

Becoming a girlfriend or wife is a status that most girls hope to reach quickly. Here is where interdependence both emotional and financial begins. What is important to stress is that it is not only women depending on men's income. Miners, given their erratic income-earning, fall back on girlfriend/wives income-earning as well. It remains to be seen who provides the bulk of shared income but whatever the case, the income exchange is likely to be vital for continued habitation in the settlement. Nonetheless, live-in relationships often are of a short duration amounting to a few months, weeks or even days, before a couple part ways.

The latter three categories denote more mature relationships involving older women, usually with children. Raising children changes the dynamic of a relationship and tests the commitment of the man. The degree of a man's emotional and economic commitment is vital to child welfare and is influenced by the couple's spatial context notably if the couple physically lives in the same house or at least the same settlement as opposed to living in different localities. Secondly, if the husband and wife's relationship is mutually considered to be sexually exclusive, it appears that monogamy, whether it is adhered to or not, may give a woman more assurance of her husband's economic commitment to raising a family. By contrast, anchor wives living away from the mining settlement in the husband's home area may be afforded material support from his extended family.

The existence of large numbers of independent women who avoid relationships with men and raise children on their own suggests that interdependence of men and women through the formation of makeshift marital ties, however hard they are sought, often fail under the duress of life in the mining settlement. These cases, frequent as they are, must be counterpoised with the existence of the enduring monogamous business-partnership marriages, which may not be sexually exclusive but have proven to be solid units for raising children and running businesses that appear most likely to bring prosperity to the husband, wife and children as a family unit.

Nonetheless, we conclude that enduring monogamous marriages are not the norm. Casual relationships and marriages are most common, a product of interpersonal flux based on emotional, economic and social circumstances rather than prostitution. The duress of gold market uncertainty and

male miners' frequent migration to new gold rush sites may make it impossible for a marriage to solidify. The prevalence of informal artisanal mine production relations are mirrored by informal conjugal relations. Wifetypes are mixed and matched through an individual's sexually active life. Polygamy, monogamy and promiscuity are all likely to play a role at one time or another in a woman's sexual life in the mining settlement.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to the popular belief that sexual relationships between men and women are 'natural' in the sense of being biologically given, this article documents how they are continually being socially and economically reconstructed through male and female negotiation, particularly in a period of rapid occupational change (Bryceson and Vuorela 1984, Giddens 1992, Diamond 1998). Demographic, cultural and labour patterns in Tanzania's mining towns differ fundamentally from that of rural areas. Both men and women are less concerned with female fertility and women's role in lineage perpetuation. Women's status is aligned with sexual desirability and, in some cases, financial partnership, rather than childbearing, akin to Giddens's concept of 'plastic sexuality' freed from the imperative of reproduction and lineage continuity.

Family formation is taking place in Tanzanian mining settlements, and the characterization of most women in mining towns as prostitutes is a gross distortion. Women, young and middle-aged, endeavor to attract and then maintain the sexual interests and the financial support of men for material security advance of themselves and their children. Men's aims are not dissimilar, but their polygamy practices and mobility, impart complexity and uncertainty in the process of Tanzanian mining family formation.

Men's and women's negotiations over sexuality are inextricably entwined with concerns about residential arrangements, financial flows and child support in Tanzanian gold-mining settlement. The preceding quotes documenting women's experiences and views indicate that attainment of Giddens's 'pure relationship' of sexual and emotional equality between the sexes is **still very distant, albeit the process of gender power negotiations in the context of emergent modernity is readily apparent, the gold mining settlement representing an intense interplay of capitalist opportunity and risk.**

Despite the general acknowledgement that sexuality is a realm of pleasure-seeking for men and women, men continue to have more maneuverability to be promiscuous, related to their high mobility and license to be polygamous, putting women on an unequal footing with them. Men often hide the sexual relations and family circumstances that they have had or are currently pursuing beyond the mining settlement. Women are far less likely to keep secrets about their family life and, as childbearers and the main childcarers, they are often literally 'left holding the baby', coping with raising children that are unsupported by their father/s.

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<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that this pattern, although less marked, has been observed to be increasingly common in Tanzania's urban areas as well, notably in Dar es Salaam (Talle 1998, Cloutier 2006).

Nonetheless, women in mining settlements tend to see themselves as liberated and modern, no longer subject to male patriarchal control exerted by their rural home areas. They choose their sexual partners and husbands, free of bridewealth arrangements and obligations between the elders of two families. In the mining settlement context, union of the conjugal couple may have a romantic edge, but the negotiations are essentially about securing material security, comfort and advance as a couple, with the question mark always hanging over whether the man is committed as much as the woman is to their relationship. Purity of the relationship is best measured in terms of mutual commitment.

Men and women's migration to mining settlements to secure an improved lifestyle generates winners and losers. Men need gold strikes to succeed. In the case of women, the wifestyle changes documented in this article have become part of the fabric of mining communities, and profoundly affect their welfare circumstances. Co-habitational relations with men are highly unstable, particularly those experience by young girls, girlfriends and polygamous wives. In the event of their material distress, there is no security fallback of the consensual village community or the welfare state enforcing male responsibility for family provisioning. In such a context, wifestyle negotiations are critical for women's and children's welfare. Not surprisingly, most women seek to achieve interdependency with men, despite the odds.

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